

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 386

By Cooper

A RESOLUTION relative to outdated concepts of race and their role in racism.

WHEREAS, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a scholar at Göttingen University, developed a concept dividing mankind into five races in the revised 1795 edition of his *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*; and

WHEREAS, Blumenbach's concept of race was further developed by Western scholars in the context of "racist ideologies" during the age of colonialism; and

WHEREAS, centered upon the division of humanity into a small number of groups based upon certain biological and behavioral criteria, these historical concepts of race eventually faced substantial scientific challenges that denied the very existence of races; and

WHEREAS, there eventually emerged a widespread scholarly consensus that discrete races are socially constructed, not biologically real; and

WHEREAS, with the rise of modern genetics, the concept of distinct human races in a biological sense has become obsolete; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the American Association of Physical Anthropologists stated: "The belief in 'races' as natural aspects of human biology, and the structures of inequality (racism) that emerge from such beliefs, are among the most damaging elements in the human experience both today and in the past."; and

WHEREAS, it is evident from these strong words that such outdated concepts of race have played a central role in establishing and maintaining systemic racism in American society; and

WHEREAS, since the ratification of its Constitution by the people on the fourth Saturday in March 1870, intolerable acts of racism have resulted in the expiration of life for citizens of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the loss of these lives has resulted in pain and undue suffering for the victims' friends and family members; and

WHEREAS, it has been established by the American Psychological Association that racism, racial discrimination, and ethnic conflict and violence are pervasive and persisting challenges for the United States of America and therefore, the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, racism and racial discrimination threaten human development because of the obstacles they pose to the fulfillment of the basic human rights of survival, security, development, and social participation; and

WHEREAS, racism, racial discrimination, and related intolerance have been shown to be attitudes and behaviors that are learned; and

WHEREAS, racism has been shown to have negative cognitive, behavioral, affective, and relational effects on both child and adult victims, nationally, globally, historically, and contemporarily; and

WHEREAS, racism has been shown to increase anxiety, depression, self-defeating thoughts, and avoidance behaviors and is linked to a host of medical complications in ethnic minority individuals; and

WHEREAS, racism has been shown to negatively affect ethnic minority children's academic and social development, self-esteem, and personal feelings of efficacy; and

WHEREAS, racism and poverty are inextricably linked, and both are risk factors for high levels of emotional distress; and

WHEREAS, racism intersects with gender in ways that result in different experiences of inequality by men and women, girls and boys; and

WHEREAS, racism negatively affects the cognitive and affective development of members of the dominant group by perpetuating distorted thinking about the self and members of marginalized or oppressed groups; and

WHEREAS, racism can promote anxiety and fear in the dominant group members whenever they are in the presence of, or anticipating the presence of, marginalized group members, often leading to acts of hostility and aggression toward ethnic minority individuals; and

WHEREAS, both active racism and passive acceptance of race-based privilege disrupt the mental health of both perpetrators and victims of racial injustice; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this resolution is to raise public awareness of racism and racial discrimination statewide and to mobilize political commitment to eliminating racism and promoting full and effective social justice; and

WHEREAS, the struggle against racism requires continuing active resistance against it at all levels and areas of the law and the use of legal precedence and practice to promote social justice and human welfare statewide; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we denounce racism in all its forms for its negative psychological, social, educational, and economic effects on human development throughout the State of Tennessee and encourage all other elected officials in this State to do likewise.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we openly stand against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance through efforts focused on elimination of all forms of racism and racial/ethnic discrimination at all levels and encourage all other elected officials in this State to do likewise.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we pledge to (1) pursue diverse racial representation at all levels of governance; (2) work to eliminate processes and procedures that perpetuate racial injustice; (3) speak out against racism and take proactive steps to prevent the occurrence of intolerant or racist acts; and (4) promote research on the alleviation of racial/ethnic injustice, and we encourage all other elected officials in this State to do likewise.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that there be an expression of sympathy for the families and friends of those who have lost their lives as a result of acts of racism.